

This picture shows the grease extracted from the garbage run into vats.

The island on which this garbage plant is built is itself made of garbage dumped into the river.

## Where Garbage is Turned Into Gold

How New York City Dumped an Island Into the East River—What Becomes of Junk and Ashes

By CARROLL EVERETT

EVERY time a New Yorker empties the ashes in his furnace, he is helping to build an island which will some day be worth a million dollars as real estate, and every time a New York housewife throws a bacon rind or a few potato parings into the garbage pail, she is helping to make somebody wealthy.

"Garbage" in New York means practically everything that is thrown away, from discarded bedsteads to discarded egg shells. And practically everything that is thrown away, although it has ceased to have any value for its original possessor, still has some worth when it goes through the intricate processes of turning garbage into gold.

When one throws bits of refuse into the waste paper basket or the garbage pail, it is with the feeling that that is the end of it. You have worn it or used it until it is worthless, and so it goes to oblivion. But so complicated and minute are the steps by which a great city disposes of its refuse that what appears as the final move toward nothingness to you is but the first step in a fascinating journey.

Your last summer's oxfords may still be doing duty in some altered form, and that old bedspring which you threw away, may have been rescued from its surroundings by the contractor who removes it, and who makes an immense profit just by sorting and redistributing of all the junk which comes his way.

Piled up in high, unsightly piles, are all the strange conglomerate articles which are thrown away in a city. Men employed by the contractors go over the wagonloads as they are received, and make a rough attempt at classifying the debris. This is the first step in turning the refuse into a marketable product. Old metals, such as brass and iron, are variously sorted, and ultimately get back again into the channels of manufacture.

An island has risen out of nothingness in the East River, built up slowly out of the water by a gradual accumulation of ashes. This is Ricker's Island, which you could not have discovered at high tide a few short years ago, but which was visible as a flat, muddy, mosquito-infested bit of swamp in low tide.

Gradually under the city's direction, this island, opposite Ninetieth street, has been formed by scow-load after scow-load of ashes and refuse. Today it is an island of considerable size, and growing constantly, as more ashes are added to the shallow spot in the river. In the course of time, it is predicted that the land of this island will be worth a million dollars, in view of

the scarcity of land close to Manhattan Island. The city's immense garbage disposal plant has been erected on Ricker's Island, and here the elaborate processes for "reducing" the garbage are carried on.

To this plant are brought all the waste, and all the garbage, and here most of it is rendered into marketable form. What doesn't lend itself to being made over into something else is merely made to increase the size of the island.

Every day of the week you may see the scows "docking" at this artificial island, and adding to the raw product which is to be turned from garbage into gold.

The waste material receives a second and thorough sorting when it reaches Ricker's Island, and such additional junk as the contractor can use is placed in the empty scows and hauled back.

This second sorting turns up a great deal of material, some of it of surprising character. The contractor's assistants always know just what purpose will be served by all the stuff, however, and it is collected into various piles to await the emptying of the scows.

However, some is sorted out of the wagons on Manhattan to save the extra hauling of it. But nothing is overlooked in the end, and every possible conversion of the discarded material is taken care of.

The cable road on the island takes care of the ashes, and transports them to whatever spot is being filled in at the time. By gradually increasing the range of the "dump," the size of the island, and its height above the river surface are being increased.

Immense steam shovels are used to load and unload the cars on the cable road, and every device of modern invention to facilitate the movement of the ashes is to be found there.

Cable cars also run from the dock to the disposal plant, carrying the refuse which is to undergo the refining processes there. In case the scows are run up close to the plant, another method of getting the materials from the barges into the plant is used. Men shovel the refuse onto a conveyor, and it is thus carried into the plant by machinery.

This conveying runway leads to the "Digester" shed. Sometimes there are scores of men at work, shoveling material upon the conveyor, so that you can imagine the capacity of the plant, and particularly of

the "Digester" machines. These machines are perhaps the most important factor in garbage reduction. They are immense tanks or boilers, placed in a horizontal position, and each with a tremendous "appetite" for raw garbage, just as it is dumped from the barges.

The garbage is placed in them, and cooked for a considerable period of time. This cooking is the big step in garbage reduction, and is the first process in securing the greases and fertilizers which are the main products of garbage reduction.

When the garbage is thoroughly steamed, or "cooked," the liquid part of it which has been drawn from the bulk by the heat is drawn off by means of tilting the great machines and allowing the heated grease to flow out.

The grease is conveyed to another type of round tank, and here the process of refining the raw grease is continued. The fluid is entirely recooked, and comes through the process in different form. The heat has refined it to a considerable degree.

Outside the "Digester," huge vats have been built, into which the grease, now in the form of a rather heavy and sticky lubricant, is allowed to run. Standing stagnant in these vats, the solid matter which still remains in it slowly settles to the bottom, and the liquid is considerably clarified. It is now of about the consistency of a heavy lubricating oil, and has a considerable market value.

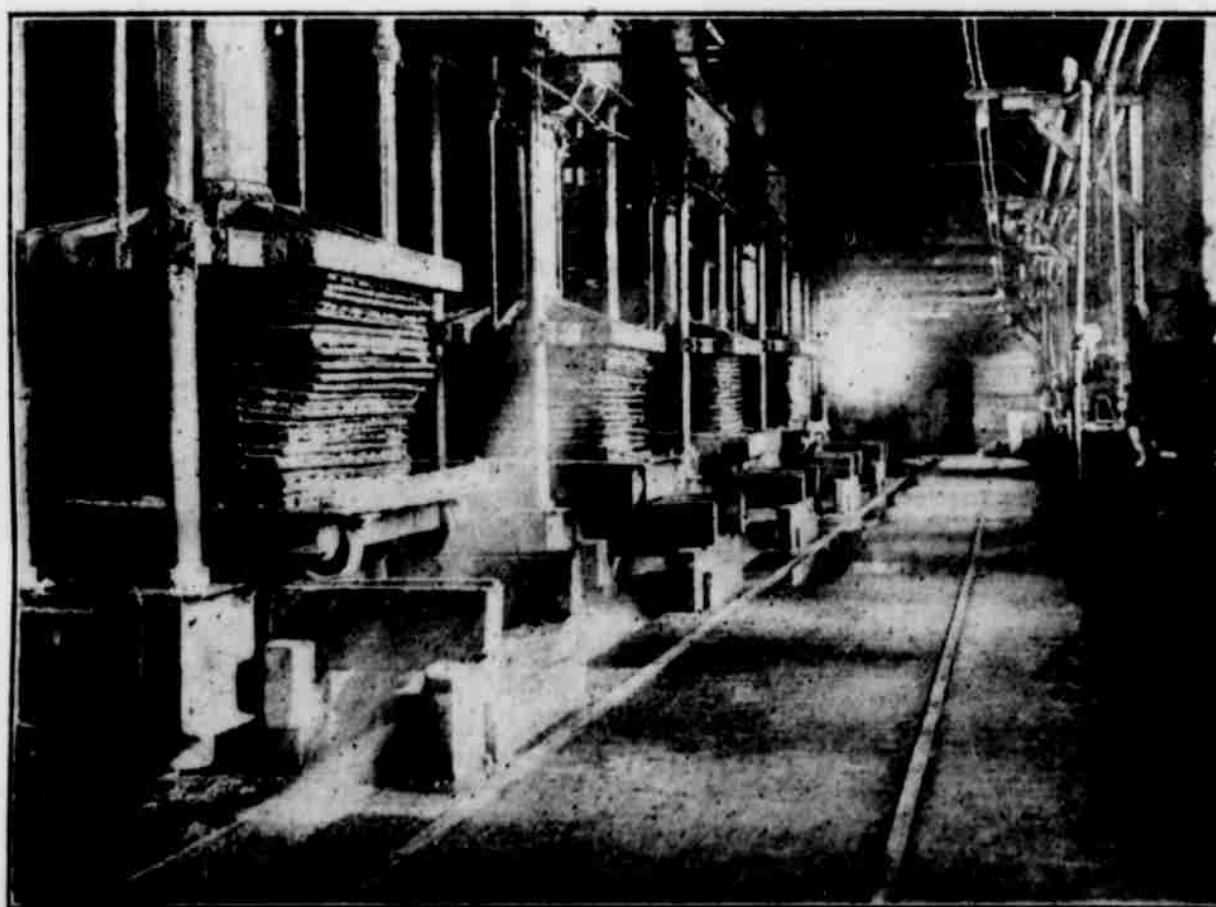
This is the condition in which the major portion of the refuse and scraps from your table ultimately find themselves, and this is the aim of the many complicated processes through which you have followed the potato peelings and the rind of bacon.

As for the solid portions of the refuse which still remain, they have their purpose to fulfill as well. They might appear to be merely the left-overs, but that does not imply that they are valueless.

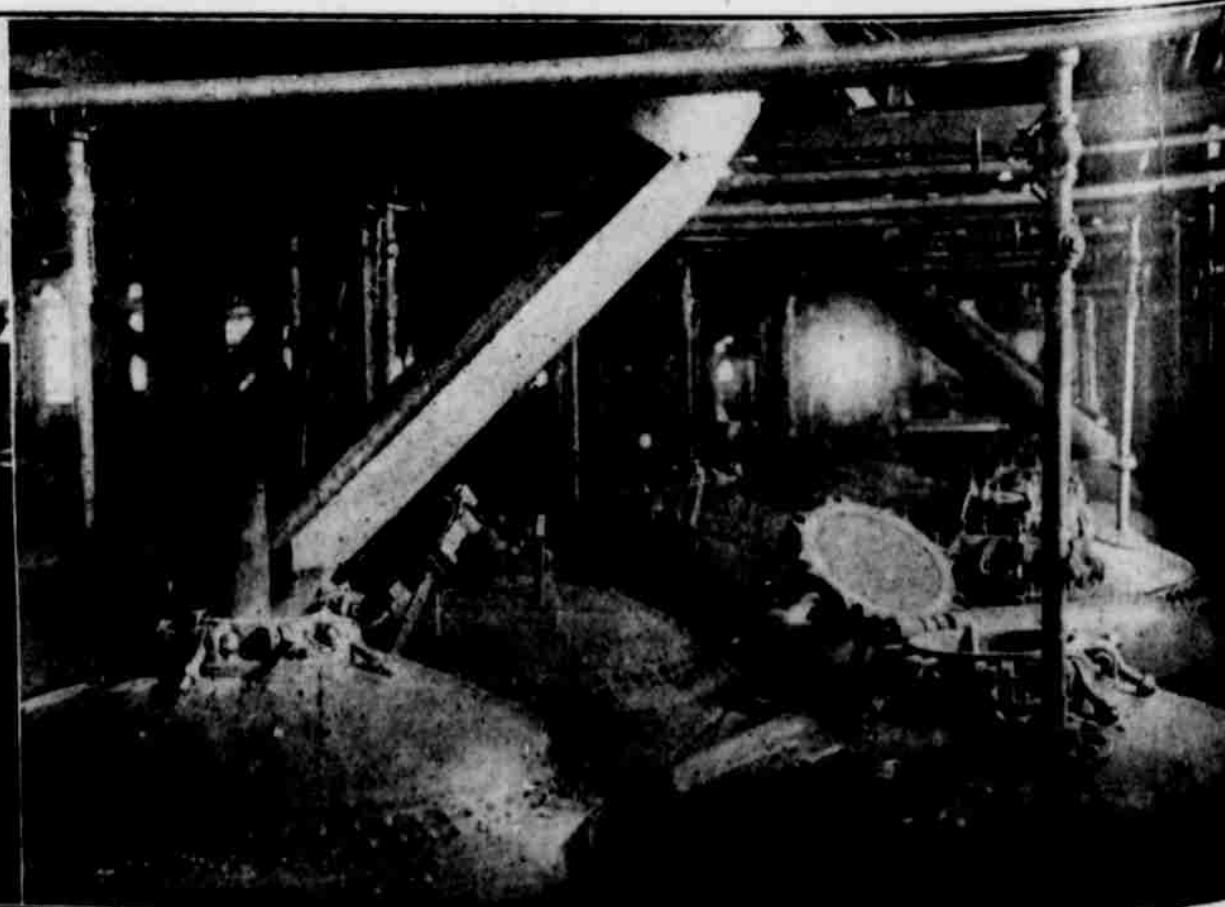
These solids are conveyed to a hydraulic press, and there subjected to immense pressure. They come out in the form of solid cakes, and in the process of making them, still more oil is squeezed from them.

These cakes are excellent fertilizer, and thus find their way back into the soil. In this manner, man helps nature in her own processes, for it is nature's way for the decayed and useless vegetation to return to the soil and enrich it.

Thus you see how garbage is turned into gold, and how refuse may be made into an island.



After the free grease and oil has been drained from the tanks of cooked garbage, this garbage goes through powerful pressing machines which extract more of the oil and grease.



Some of the great tanks or garbage "Digesters" into which the garbage is placed and heated to separate the grease from other material.